

- 🎵🎵 *These times, they are a' changin'...* 🎵🎵

On October 13 of this year, the Swedish Academy shocked the world by awarding the Nobel Prize in Literature to singer-songwriter Bob Dylan, for “having created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition.”

- Speaking to a room filled with startled reporters, the Academy’s permanent secretary, Sara Danius, said Dylan “is a great poet in the English-speaking tradition.”
- She drew parallels between his work and that of ancient Greek poets. “If you look back, far back, 2,500 years or so, you discover Homer and Sappho and they wrote poetic texts that were meant to be listened to, that were meant to be performed, often with instruments -- and it's the same way with Bob Dylan,” she said.
- Dylan’s Nobel Prize stirred fierce reaction which began almost immediately on social media and then continued in the traditional press.
- For me, I was reminded of one of Dylan’s own songs, “Idiot Wind” which has the following lyrics:
*Now everything’s a little upside down
As a matter of fact the wheels have stopped
What’s good is bad, What’s bad is good
You’ll find out when you reach the top, You’re on the bottom*

- I wanted great readings for today, the climatic finish of our message series and instead, the Church focuses us on death, on the cruel torture of those who stand up for their faith and then the question over 1 bride for seven brothers and what happens in the kingdom.

- Nothing stirring for a dramatic conclusion. Don't get me wrong, I think they're great readings and they point to the far bigger picture of the way God works.
- The seven brothers, and the mother who watches each suffer, do not go through all of that because they hate pork.
 - No, they do it because they love the Lord, their God. They recognize that they have been created by Him and that they receive their hope from Him.
 - This suffering, painful as it is, is only temporary. Those with brute strength may dominate now but the brothers and their mother know that real power comes from God and gives endurance to the outlast pain and suffering.
- And then in our Gospel, Jesus says to the Sadducees that they too are thinking too small. The Sadducees did not believe resurrection, so their question to understand the ways of the Lord but an attempt to trap Jesus.
- And Jesus refuses to be trapped. He tells His listeners to pull back the camera of their mind's eye and look, not at an individual case but at the point of heaven itself.
 - Heaven is about being with God, about experiencing God's love in a radical way.
 - God is the fulfillment of married love, the complete gift of self to the other.
 - Human love is only a shadow that fades away in the fullness of the light of Christ.
- In other words, Jesus is saying think bigger. Think more about God and less about you.

- And this is, I think the call for us as we close out our message series: Think bigger. Think discipleship. Ask not what your God can do for you. Rather ask what you can do for your God.
- I have closed each homily of the last four weeks with the exhortation, Let's go make disciples. That rises to a clarion call now
- *Go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all I have commanded you. Behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age."*
 - As we conclude this message series on the discipleship, I want to focus on the four verbs on the Great Commission:
 - GO, MAKE, BAPTIZE, TEACH
- Jesus starts with the command to go, to move out, to leave where we are and go where we need to be, to be where God calls us.
 - Think for a moment about the scene of the Ascension, when Jesus gives the Great Commission.
 - The disciples are there with Him.
 - They have done great things in His Name and they know the power of His Love.
 - They have experienced the Resurrected Jesus, ate and drank and touched the one they had seen crucified.
 - They know their sins, their abandoning Jesus in His hour of need, and they know those sins are forgiven.
 - And now He is sending them out, beyond this comfortable place, beyond what they have known, out into difficult service and severe sacrifice. GO.
 - GO beyond your comfort zone, Go out from the safety and security and orderliness of doctrine and dogma and enter the messy world of sinfulness, of suffering, of despair.

- And then, MAKE DISCIPLES.
 - We talked that the disciple is someone who searches for the heart of Jesus. Like Zacchaeus last week, the disciple is willing to be challenged and transformed, willing to accept salvation by working towards offering the same to others.
 - Once one knows the heart of Jesus, the call is to become an apostle. There were 12 Apostles, capital “A” but each one of us is called to be an apostles, small “a” meaning one who is sent, sent precisely to make other disciples
 - To make disciples, then is to offer to others the heart of Jesus. Offer them a heart of love and acceptance if they disagree or are angry or challenge you. Offer them a heart of forgiveness if they have hurt you. Offer them a heart of strength and compassion if they are suffering and in need. Offer them a heart of understand if they are fearful and afraid.
 - One of the Mom’s said to me, discipleship is very simple to understand. Discipleship means giving God my whole heart and seeing everything I do as done for Jesus: whether it is folding laundry, or going to work or buying shoes, or even voting. Do it for Jesus, share the heart of Jesus.
 - I think she has point there, especially on voting. Too many people today are voting out of fear, fear of financial struggle or immigration or life issues. Jesus has promised that the gates of hell will never prevail. It’s not that we throw up our hands, but that we seek to make disciples, to share the heart of Jesus.

- As Pope Benedict said in his last encyclical, *Deus caritas est*, “There are times when the burden of need and our own limitations might tempt us to become discouraged.
 - But precisely then we are helped by the knowledge that, in the end, we are only instruments in the Lord's hands; and this knowledge frees us from the presumption of thinking that we alone are personally responsible for building a better world.
 - In all humility we will do what we can, and in all humility we will entrust the rest to the Lord. It is God who governs the world, not we.
 - We offer him our service only to the extent that we can, and for as long as he grants us the strength. To do all we can with what strength we have, however, is the task which keeps the good servant of Jesus Christ always at work: “The love of Christ urges us on” (2 Cor 5:14).
(*Deus caritas est*, 35)

- And it is this love which brings us to our next verb: **Baptize** them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
 - Baptism signifies relationship. The baptized is drawn into the very life of God, becomes a child of God. I always think of my mother who said, “I love ALL children. I love my own a little bit more.” To be baptized is to be God’s child, God’s beloved.
 - To baptize then is to offer the love of the Father, the salvation of the Son and the companionship of the Spirit, to give people the strength to endure and the joy to share.

- Baptism also makes us brothers and sisters in Christ, joined together by Holy Mother Church. Baptism joins us to the community of God's children. Here it's clear, that the Church is not a fortress for the Saint only but a refuge for the sinner, a home, a place of support, love, guidance, forgiveness, acceptance.
- The command of Jesus to baptize does not merely mean pour the water. It means to accompany the one who is baptized as a fellow pilgrim, as a sister or brother in the Lord.
- And lastly, Jesus tells us to TEACH and he makes clear what the content is: ALL that I have commanded.
 - Notice that "Teach" comes only AFTER the other three, only after we have gone to where the other is, only after we have sought to make a disciple by sharing the heart of Jesus and after we have established a relationship which will culminate with baptism.
 - But once we have journeyed with the other in those areas, we must teach and share the content of our faith. So we start with the greatest commandment Jesus taught us: love one another as I have loved you.
 - And the rest of the content of our faith flows from there: the 10 commandments open us to God and others, the beatitudes focus us laser like on service of God and others.

- The teachings of Christ and His Church regarding the sacredness of human life, the dignity of the human person, peace, justice, marriage, sexuality, family life are not onerous dictates from an uncaring institution that wants to eliminate fun but a part of our discipleship flowing from God's care for us, part of the encouragement, hope, and guidance that Saint Paul speaks of in our second reading.
- Jesus shared these teachings as part of the love He offered to His disciples, the love of our heavenly Father, again not rigid dictates to be imposed at all costs as some would have it or mere suggestions or the threads of the social fabric of His day.
- Jesus offered us these teachings to be, as the Army used to say, the best we can be. And He was already ready to forgive when we did not make the grade.

- GO. MAKE. BAPTIZE. TEACH.
- With these words and this commission Jesus reminds us that our values are not dictated by this world. In fact, as Bob Dylan reminds us that the wheels of this world have to stop; that in God's world everything is a more than a little upside down; that what the world thinks is good, power, fame, money, sex, control can often be VERY bad and what the world thinks is bad: humility, meekness, mildness, docility, putting the other first, is actually very GOOD.
- *You'll find out when you reach the top, You're on the bottom.* Discipleship is about putting ourselves on the bottom and the other on the top, so that we might end up with the Lord.

- Again, in the immortal words of the newest Nobel Prize winner:
*Just surrender to God and He'll move you right here where you stand,
and Ye shall be changed, ye shall be changed
In a twinkling of an eye, when the last trumpet blows
The dead will arise and burst out of your clothes
And ye shall be changed.*